be allowed to avail of 10 restricted holidays in a year. Government holidays should be delinked from the holidays under the Negotiable Instrument Act.

Investment of EPF Assets

1745. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) has invested 80 per cent of its assets in a special deposit scheme which is paying only nine per cent interest and the fund would not be able to sustain a 9.5 per cent interest rate and would thus eat its surplus;

(b) whether it is also a fact that he has promised to pay 9.5 per cent interest rate to the EPF subscribers; and

(c) if so, how Government propose to cover up the gap?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) As on 30.09.2002, of the total corpus of Employees Provident Fund, 78.46% has been invested in the Special Deposit Scheme (SDS).

(b) and (c) According to the Central Board of Trustees (Employees Provident Fund), it would be sustainable to fix the rate of interest on Employees Provident Fund for 2002-2003 at 9.5%.

Appointment of Lokpal

1746. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court of India during the cause of a recent judgement under scored the need for appointment of a Lokpal to ensure probity in public life;

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) by when the institution of Lokpal is likely to be created and an incumbent put in place?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) During the course of argument, on 19.8.2002, in W.P. (C) No. 26 of 1995—Common Cause, a Registered Society-*vs*-Union of India and others and upon a query from the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the then Solicitor General informed the status of the Lokpal Bill and the Hon'ble